

## URBAN AFFAIRS

# Incentives report released; mayor talks climate during council break

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### **Liveable City releases tax incentives report**

The Austin nonprofit group Liveable City has released a report about how the city handles tax incentive packages.

Written by University of Texas professor and Liveable City board member Michael Oden, the report concludes that the city has been fairly disciplined about giving incentives — granting 19 tax incentive deals from 1991 to 2006, compared with 91 in Houston and 208 in Dallas.

But Oden notes that the full cost of such deals (including fee waivers and infrastructure subsidies) was hard to determine from public records. And he concludes that some deals, such as the \$37 million agreement with the Domain shopping center, were problematic because there was not enough public input before they were passed.

Liveable City recommends that the city have a neutral third party do a cost-benefit analysis of any potential tax incentive deal. It also wants the city to hold a public hearing well before any such deal is completed. And it wants the city to produce a clear document detailing how much has been spent on current tax incentive agreements.